The egg of *Baculofractum insignis* (Brunner)

J.T.C. Sellick, "Montemassi", 31 Regent Street, Kettering, Northants, NN16 8QG, UK.

Abstract

The capitulum of the egg of *Baculofractum insignis* described, and the egg illustrated. The unusual features of the egg are discussed.

Key words

Baculofractum insignis, egg structure.

The genus *Baculofractum* Zompro, 1995 was erected for what was previously *Carausius insignis*. The significant reason for this was the discovery that the male of this species was winged, whereas in *Carausius*, and indeed in the whole of the Lonchodinae in which it was placed, males are apterous. As a consequence the new genus was placed in Necrosciinae.

Zompro (1995) described both the male and the egg of this species for the first time. However the egg was illustrated only by a lateral black-and-white photograph. Both description and photograph lack the capitulum of this egg. Zompro's description (translated from the German) is:— "Dimensions (average of five eggs): length 4.4mm, width 2.95mm, height 3.75mm. Dark brown; round, laterally bevelled, surface with more or less round depressions that are enclosed by very short-bristly raised areas. Micropylar plate darker, raised above the egg surface, laterally widened at the level of the micropyle. Operculum flat, with a conical projection."

It can be seen from Fig. 1 that this is accurate, as far as it goes. The bristles are indeed very short (around 0.01mm long) and difficult to detect. Zompro suspects that these may be lost in older eggs. I have recently been sent a number of eggs of this species by Wim Potvin, one of which retains its capitulum. Zompro (personal communication, 1997) saw several hundred eggs of this species without finding a single one which retained its capitulum. However the position of the capitulum stalk is clearly visible in those opercula which have

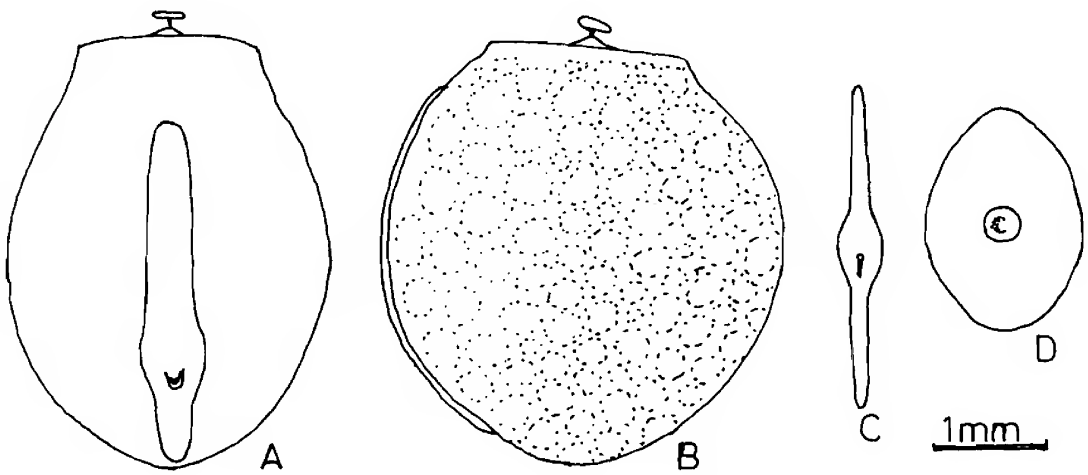

Figure 1. Egg of *Baculofractum insignis*.
A. dorsal; B. lateral; C. internal micropylar plate; D. operculum.
Surface patterning shown on lateral view only.

lost the actual capitulum. Whatever the function of a stalked capitulum, this species shows more than most the fragility of its attachment to the operculum. This capitulum is so far unique in its minute size (0.2mm diameter) and very fine stalk (0.06mm thick). It is pale yellowish-brown and button-shaped with a central depression, very much like a capitulum of a genuine *Carausius*.

The internal micropylar plate follows roughly the outline of the external plate, though narrower, and it is closed. This is the first egg with this type of capitulum that I have found with a closed internal plate. This egg therefore shows a combination of characters from the two subfamilies and is a further indication for the need to reexamine relationships within this family. Stalked button capitula have only previously been found in the Lonchodinae (all of which have open plates with median lines) whilst the closed internal plate most closely resembles that of *Phaenopharos* Kirby, 1904 of the Necrosciinae, though the capitulum of this genus is not stalked.

References

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